

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 15637

E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: ALLEGED AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SYRIANS AND PRESIDENT
FRANGIE'S REPRESENTATIVE ON PRINCIPLES OF A SETTLEMENT OF THE
LEBANESE CRISIS

SUMMARY. DURING RECENT VISIT TO DAMASCUS, PRES FRANGIE'S
CONFIDANT AND FORMER FORMIN LUCIEN DAHDAH REACHED AN AGREE-
MENT IN PRINCIPLE WITH THE SYRIANS ON SETTLING THE LEBANESE CRISIS.
FRANGIE WILL REMAIN IN OFFICE UNTIL END OF HIS TERM AND ACT AS
SPOKESMAN FOR THE CHRISTIAN SIDE. SYRIA WILL MOUNT EFFORT TO
HAVE ALL MOSLEM FACTIONS SUPPORT KARAME AS THEIR SPOKESMAN.
AT AN ENVISIONED "PLENIPOTENTIARY MEETING" FRANGIE AND KARAME
WOULD WORK OUT PACKAGE DEAL IN COMPLETE DETAIL. DETAILS WOULD
COVER INTER ALIA QUESTION OF LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY, DISTRIBUTION
OF GOVT JOBS, POWERS OF PRIMIN AND PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, WHERE
AGREEMENT OVER SPECIFICS WILL BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT. SYRIANS PRE-
PARED TO QUARANTEE AGREEMENT ALONE, BUT CHRISTIANS INSIST ON CO-
GUARANTOR. SOME SORT OF INTERNATIONAL POLICE PROPOSED PENDING
BUILD UP OF ADEQUATE GOL FORCE. ABOVE DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTS
SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS, BUT THERE IS STILL A VERY LONG WAY TO GO
TOWARD SATISFACTORY SETTLEMENT OF THE CRISIS. END SUMMARY.

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1. INTER-INVESTMENT COMPANY PRESIDENT AND FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER LUCIEN DAHDAH BRIEFED EMBOFF ON TRIP TO DAMASCUS MADE ON BEHALF OF PRES FRANGIE TO WHOM HE IS RELATED BY MARRIAGE. PURPOSE OF VISIT WAS TO REACH A MEETING OF MINDS WITH THE SYRIANS FROM THE CHRISTIAN POINT OF VIEW ON A SETTLEMENT OF THE LEBANESE CRISIS, AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF A SETTLEMENT WERE IN FACT ESTABLISHED. THESE INCLUDE KEEPING FRANGIE IN OFFICE UNTIL THE END OF HIS TERM (DAHDAH CLAIMS FRANGIE WAS WILLING TO RESIGN VOLUNTARILY IF THIS WOULD HELP THE SITUATION) IN ORDER TO ACT AS SPOKESMAN FOR THE CHRISTIAN SIDE. (BACKED UP BY CHAMOUN AND GEMAYEL, IT IS ESTIMATED THAT FRANGIE CAN SPEAK FOR ABOUT 90 PERCENT OF THE CHRISTIANS.)

2. INTENDED MOSLEM SPOKESMAN FOR WHAT IS ENVISIONED IS A TWO-MAN MEETING BETWEEN PLENIPOTENTIARIES TO REACH A SETTLEMENT WOULD BE RASHID KARAME. DIFFICULTY HERE IS THAT MOSLEM SIDE SPLINTERED AND KARAME UNABLE TO COMMIT MOSLEMS WITHOUT ENDLESS CONSULTATIONS. SYRIANS WILL THEREFORE MOUNT MASSIVE PRESSURE CAMPAIGN TO GET MOSLEM FACTIONS TO GIVE KARAME HIS FULL SUPPORT.

3. AT ENVISIONED MEETING FRANGIE AND KARAME WOULD WORK OUT PACKAGE DEAL SPELLED OUT IN GREAT DETAIL. FOR WHOLE DEAL TO BE VALID ALL PARTS WOULD HAVE TO BE IMPLEMENTED. SYRIANS PREPARED TO GUARANTEE AGREEMENT ALONE, BUT CHRISTIANS INSIST ON CO-GUARANTOR SUCH AS FRANCE, BELGIUM, ARAB LEAGUE OR (PREFERABLY) THE UN. PENDING BUILD-UP OF LEBANESE POLICE OFFICE TO ASSURE AGREEMENT AN OUTSIDE FORCE WOULD BE USED WHICH COULD BE CALLED A "RECONSTRUCTION AND SECURITY

MISSION". (BY OVERSEEING THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE LEBANESE ECONOMY AS WELL AS SECURITY, MISSION MIGHT BE MORE POLITICALLY ACCEPTABLE.)

4. PART OF PACKAGE DEAL WOULD CONCERN LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY. (STRICT IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO AND MELKERT AGREEMENTS WOULD PROBABLY SUFFICE).

5. CONCERNING POLITICAL CONCESSIONS BY THE CHRISTIANS, THE CONFIDENTIAL

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MOST CONTROVERSIAL DEAL WITH THE POWERS OF THE PRIMIN AND THE FORMATION OF THE PARLIAMENT. (ON THE QUESTION OF GOVT JOBS, THERE IS ALREADY WILLINGNESS ON THE PART OF THE CHRISTIANS TO SHARE THE TOP 140 POSITIONS EQUALLY.)

6. DAHDAH SAID THAT THE CHRISTIANS WOULD HOPE TO HAVE THE POSITION OF PRESIDENT OR PRIMIN, DEPENDING WHICH TURNS OUT TO BE MORE IMPORTANT WHEN LATTER IS REDEFINED. HE SEES

GREAT PROBLEMS WITH PARLIAMENTARY REFORMS BUT HOPES TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN PROPOSING A COMPROMISE UNDER WHICH CHRISTIANS WOULD MAINTAIN SIX TO FIVE MAJORITY WITH MOSLEMS DRAFTING NEW PARLIAMENTARY LAW, OR HAVING PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION EQUAL, WITH CHRISTIANS DRAFTING NEW PARLIAMENTARY LAW.

7. DAHDAH OBSERVED THAT HE WAS BOTH SURPRISED AND GREATLY IMPRESSED BY WHAT HE FOUND TO BE THE CORDIAL WORKING RELATIONS EXISTING BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND SYRIA. BECAUSE OF THIS HE THOUGHT THAT THE U.S. COULD PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN INFORMALLY ASSISTING IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ANY AGREEMENT. ALTHOUGH FORMING A SHARP CONTRAST WITH PRES FRANGIE WITH RESPECT TO POLISH, EDUCATION AND A BROAD KNOWLEDGE OF WORLD AFFAIRS, DAHDAH REITERATED THE SAME HARD-NOSE CHRISTIAN LINE. BASICALLY HE CLAIMED THAT THE CHRISTIANS WERE UNDER NO OBLIGATION TO MAKE ANY CONCESSIONS BUT THAT THEY WERE NEVERTHELESS PREPARED TO DO SO.

8. COMMENT: WE ASSUME DAHDAH'S REPORTING IS ACCURATE. HOWEVER, WHILE WHAT HAS BEEN DECIDED OFFERS SOME HOPE, A LONG ROAD REMAINS BEFORE ARRIVING AT A SOLUTION. THERE IS THE PROBLEM OF GETTING SUFFICIENT BACKING FOR KARAME DESPITE MAXIMUM SYRIAN EFFORTS. THERE IS THE QUESTION OF A CO-GUARANTOR AND THE EVEN STICKIER ONE OF AN OUTSIDE POLICE FORCE. THE SPECIFICS FOR THE VERY REFORMS THEMSELVES ARE DISPUTED. FINALLY, THERE IS THE ATMOSPHERE OF ALMOST TOTAL DISTRUST IN WHICH THE SLIGHTEST INCIDENT CAN SEND EVERYTHING BACK TO POINT ZERO.
GODLEY

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